

Leaning on Jesus in the Wilderness of Temptation

Song of Solomon 8:4-5; Proverbs 3:5-7

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The root of being misled and deceived by others even being deceived by yourself is leaning upon your own understanding rather than leaning upon the Lord Jesus and His Word (Proverbs 3:5-7). Whereas the world in all of its conceit proclaims its false gospel of trusting in yourself to know what is right and wrong and what is truth and error (following your own heart and your own truth), the God of the Bible is truth itself (John 14:6) and every man a liar (Romans 3:4). God declares we are setting ourselves up to be misled and deceived; in fact, He says we are fools to put our complete trust in corruptible and changeable man—whether in ourselves (Proverbs 28:26) or in leaders/experts (Psalm 118:8-9).

We should hold a healthy skepticism about our own independent knowledge and a total trust in the knowledge of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. There are so many peddlers of alleged knowledge and activism running around, fomenting panic, sexual perversions, violence, and seeking to mislead you by their perversions of what is truth, justice, and rights (Exodus 23:2). Scripture is alone our infallible rule of what is right or wrong, truth or error, justice or prejudice, rights or oppression (Proverbs 30:5-6). You can only avoid deception as you walk daily in communion with Jesus Christ and saturate your minds with His truth found in His Word. This is not communion without truth or truth without communion, but rather communion with Jesus in His truth.

The main points from our text are: (1) Do Not Disturb (Song 8:4); (2) Lean on Jesus (Song 8:5a); (3) Commune with Jesus (Song 8:5b).

I. Do Not Disturb (Song 8:4).

A. In Song 8:1-3, the elect bride of Jesus Christ desired her love and devotion for Jesus to be a public love—not a love confined to the privacy of her own heart or home—not a love that is ashamed of what others may say by way of ridicule about your commitment to stand for Jesus and His truth, but a love that says to the world that there is nothing more important to you than your love for Christ, His gospel, and law.

1. His love for you, His elect, was not hidden and secret, but was publicly displayed when He died a cruel and cursed death that all of the world may know how much He has loved you. He suffered your just punishment to set you free from sin's guilt, punishment, and power.

2. When you gather for worship each Lord's Day, you are to bring Jesus with you ("I would lead thee" Song 8:2), not simply to meet Him here. His divine appointed ordinances of public worship are to be offered to Him as a tangible expression of your love for Him "as spiced wine" Song 8:2. When you bring the Jesus to worship to shower Him with your love, He will embrace you with His loving arms (Song 8:3). Worship will then be a love feast back and forth between Jesus and you. His Word will then powerfully humble you, instruct you, and change you.

B. Now as we look at Song 8:4, Christ's elect bride is so filled with delight and contentment as she enjoys His loving communion in His divine appointed ordinances that she does not want it to end—she hungers and thirsts that His sensible presence with her in worship will continue. Is that your prayer? She wants to place (as it were) a "Do not disturb" sign on the doors of the meeting place. That is the reason for the words in Song 8:4 to the daughters of Jerusalem (professing Christian members of the Visible Church). What is it that disturbs the Lord Jesus so that He arises and takes His sensible presence from our public worship?

1. Corrupting the pure gospel of Jesus Christ (trusting in our own works, doubting His love in time of trouble).

2. Walking in disobedience to His commandments (compromising the truth in order to be accepted, surrendering the truth in order to avoid persecution, truth is relative rather than unchangeable, judging others by a different standard than you judge yourself).

3. Leaving Jesus as our first love (not bringing Him with you).

4. Tearing down one another in bitterness, rather than building up one another in brotherly love (divisions at home/church).

5. Being ashamed to bear a public testimony for Jesus before family, friends, and co-workers.

6. However, it is the broken and contrite heart that quickly confesses, repents, and seeks the Lord's forgiveness that brings Him back. It is the heart that is ashamed with sin by way of self-examination that will sooner bring the Lord Jesus back in that sensible presence of joy and delight to the public gathering of the church. Your sin and mine in our hearts and in our family may hinder the sense of His presence with us.

II. Lean on Jesus (Song 8:5a).

A. Now the daughters of Jerusalem respond to the elect bride just as they did with similar words previously (Song 3:6). Literally, "Who is she?" These are words of astonishment over the beauty of the bride. "Wow! Look at her!" Once again the professing Visible Church is in utter amazement at the glorious attractiveness of the elect bride. She has no equal in all of the earth as she leans upon Jesus and communes with Him. It is the beauty of Christ in her that makes her so strikingly attractive. It is not a beauty that can be hidden (any more than the light of Christ in His transfiguration). The world will hate you and call you ugly, but that is simply because they hate the beauty of Christ in you. The professing Christian Church is here overwhelmed and most importantly Jesus is ravished at your beauty, for it is His beauty in you (Song 6:4).

B. There are two stated reasons why the daughters of Jerusalem see the elect bride as so beautiful in Song 8:5a.

1. **"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?"** The beauty of Christ in her was magnified as she was coming out of the wilderness, just as light seems most brilliant when entering a dark room.

a. The wilderness here speaks of dangers, trials, temptations, heartaches, and afflictions suffered in this world. It is a curse to those in Adam, but a means of blessing to all those in Christ. Just as the unbelieving generation of Israelites perished in the wilderness, so the believing generation of Israelites came forth into the Promise Land beautified and fortified. Just as Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, but came forth beautified and empowered to declare and live the will of God, so likewise here the bride is brought forth out of the wilderness beautified and strengthened through all that she has endured in this wilderness of tribulation. The dangers and tribulations of the wilderness did not make the bride ugly, but rather beautified her. And this is the reason the daughters of Jerusalem were so astonished. They can hardly believe their eyes when they behold the beauty of the bride that has come up from the wilderness.

b. Can the same be said about you? Are you becoming more beautiful through the trials and temptations you face, or more ugly? Is the beauty of Jesus in you more brilliant as you pass through heartaches, sorrows, losses, and physical afflictions, or are you becoming bitter, resentful, angry, indifferent, compromising, and drifting away from the Lord as you pass through the wilderness of this world?

c. Carefully note that the bride is not looking back over her shoulder at the pleasures and temptations of this worldly wilderness with a desire to return there or remain there (as did Lot's wife). She is pressing upward, heavenward ("that cometh up from the wilderness"). Dear ones, this wilderness in which you live is not your home. You are not to stop and build your life upon a foundation of sand in this wilderness. You are pilgrims passing through. You must not hold tightly to this wilderness which is perishing,

but rather to that heavenly kingdom that endures for all eternity. Where are your priorities in what you gain in this world? Where is your treasure? Do you count all things as dung in order to gain Jesus Christ? That is the first reason for why she is so beautiful.

2. **“Who is this... leaning upon her beloved?”** This is the second reason for the astonishment of the daughters of Jerusalem at the glorious beauty of the bride.

a. Clearly, her beauty was not due to herself, but rather was due to Him upon whom she leaned—her Beloved, Jesus Christ. We have no beauty in ourselves. We are all ugly in Adam due to our sin. Our sin disfigures us, scars us, and makes us worthy of God’s eternal condemnation in hell. It is only the beauty of Christ’s perfect righteousness that beautifies us, removes the scars of sin, and presents us without spot or wrinkle before God now and for all eternity.

b. The “leaning” here of the bride is her trust and rest in Jesus Christ alone for her justification and sanctification. She leans upon Jesus because she is weak in herself, because she is helpless in herself, because she has no moral strength to stand by herself (all her righteousness is as filthy rags). She leans upon Jesus because He is Almighty God and Savior who assumed humanity to His divine person, suffered as no man has ever suffered, and satisfied God’s everlasting and just wrath for His elect, so that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). It is faith in Jesus Christ that is the means of pouring the beauty of His love into your heart. The more you lean upon Jesus, the more you will love Him. The more you love Him, the more you will lean upon Him as you pass through the wilderness (“faith worketh by love” Galatians 5:16).

c. This is the opposite of leaning upon your own understanding, wisdom, or goodness. That is highly prized by the world, but it is utterly despised by Jesus Christ. Jesus highly prizes your leaning upon His promises (“Let us pass over to the other side”—faith not sight). It is easy to forget when all is going well that you only stand by leaning upon the Lord. If you have a surplus of health, money, property, and have sufficient for many days (a pension, a bank account), you are still absolutely dependent upon Jesus for your daily bread. All that you lean upon in this life can vanish in a moment and you can be swept away in a moment (Luke 12:16-20). The beauty of the bride is especially noted to be in her leaning upon her beloved as she passed through the wilderness. The wilderness did not shake her faith. It tested her faith, it purified her faith, and it strengthened her faith. That is the reason for the very trials you are facing right now—not to cast you down in despair, but to lift you up in your journey to heaven. Leaning upon Christ in the wilderness is the second stated reason for the elect bride’s beauty to the astonishment of the daughters of Jerusalem.

III. Commune with Jesus (Song 5b).

A. It may appear from the English text that this is Jesus now speaking to the bride, but the Hebrew text reveals it is the bride speaking to Jesus (“thee”, “thy” are all in the masculine gender). Here the bride recalls the loving communion she had under the shadow of the apple tree, Christ (Song 2:3). “I raised thee” is simply to say, “I awakened thee” by the sweet means of grace (the word, prayer, and sacraments). He may appear to be asleep, but He is awakened by your desperate pleas (“Lord, we are perishing”). There under the apple tree of Jesus Christ, the Visible Church (“thy mother”) brought Jesus forth through the ordinances until Jesus was fully formed in you, His elect bride (Galatians 4:19).

B. This we must add as another reason for the unsurpassing beauty of the bride: she is made beautiful through her communion with Jesus Christ. That is your daily beauty treatment, dear Christian: spending time in the presence of Christ magnifies His beauty in you. There is no other way for the Christian to be beautiful. The wilderness cannot make you ugly as long as you abide in His righteousness, His love, and His ordinances by faith in leaning upon Jesus.

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